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ABSTRACT

The origin of the Associated Press (AP) lies in the early cooperative news gathering efforts of the editors of several New York newspapers. As early as May 1846, these editors were "pooling" their energies in response to newly developed modes of communication--the wire and wireless telegraph and the trans-oceanic steamship mail services. The officially organized New York Associated Press (NYAP) was created in 1848 with a formal agreement among the member newspapers to use common telegraphic lines and other communication modes in gathering and passing news dispatches. A comparison of similar stories in widely separated newspapers demonstrates that the NYAP sold its news stories to newspapers throughout the United States. The Associated Press, as it currently exists, evolved from the NYAP. (CH)

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Early Telegraphic News Dispatches: The Forerunner of the AP

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April 1973

Northwestern University

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Early Telegraphic News Dispatches: The Forerunner of the AP

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One of journalism's most romantic episodes was the rapidly expanding news-gathering arrangements and efforts between the mid-1830s and the Civil War. The appearance of ocean-going steamships, Washington correspondents, the telegraph, and news expresses by horseback, locomotive and steamer transformed American journalism within thirty years into an active, news-hungary industry. Tendencies toward the "scoop mentality" grew hand-in-hand with the new technology of steam and electricity.

Central to this period of development was the New York Associated Press, forerunner of today's Associated Press. Historical literature relates how the New York AP grew up as a cooperative of six, and later seven, of New York's leading morning newspapers, utilizing steamships to meet transatlantic steamers nearing New York's harbor and establishing a network of telegraphic agents to gather news for the common use of the overseeing New York dailies. Within a few months of perfecting their communication system for their own use, these papers were selling their daily report to papers beyond New York City.[1]

Source material fails to pinpoint the exact founding date of the NYAP, although several researchers have sought to identify the date, and a few have claimed to have succeeded at such a venture.[2] Journalism history will surely survive the absence of this bit of information, but the discipline's continual inability to fill this gap has intrigued the present writer to the point of appealing to New York dailies' news columns for a final verdict.

The literature currently gives May 13, 1848, as the earliest recorded date of AP's existence,[3] and nothing in this paper will alter the significance of that evidence. The major purpose of this paper, however, is to

trace New York City newspapers' communal news-gathering efforts prior to May, 1848, in order to suggest that the origins of the AP are considerably earlier than historians have assumed. In fact, the author was surprised to discover how completely and immediately the New York press leaders, acting in common, took advantage of each new line of telegraph as it was opened.

A second purpose of this paper is to advance the notion that the precarious and haphazard operation and construction of telegraph systems during the mid-1840s precluded the possibility of a tidy, formal founding date for the AP, or any other news agency at this time, and further, that the eventual emergence of the NYAP from these early news-gathering attempts serves to link the pre- and post-May, 1848, activities of the New York press as but earlier and later stages of the same enterprise -- creation and perfection of a news-broker agency.

Methodology

Without credit lines or logotypes,[4] identifying the earliest instances of cooperative news-gathering required comparing specific dispatches about the same news events in various newspapers. Telegraphic news from Washington, D.C., and dispatches containing the news carried by inbound transatlantic steamers were selected for study. They would have been conveyed by the earliest telegraphic lines connecting New York City with the outside world. (The New York-Washington line was completed on June 5, 1846, and the New York-Boston line, June 27, 1846.) Additionally, Washington news (especially reports of Congressional business) and the arrivals of ocean steamers would provide a regular, and easily identifiable, chain of events -- a yardstick in time and space against which newspapers' earliest and regular use of common news dispatches could be measured.

Comparison of dispatches would identify cooperative news-gathering

efforts on the basis, it was initially thought, of similarities of fact and/or writing style. As it turned out, however, nothing quite as subtle as fact or style was necessary. From the moment a telegraph line began operation and the newspapers examined began receiving telegraphic news dispatches, the stories carried in common were identical, word-for-word.

The research method of this paper, quite simply, was the tedious reading of microfilm files of selected leading New York newspapers during the period of telegraphic growth, focusing on the Washington and trans-atlantic news dispatches. In order to avoid discrepancies in wording which might arise from copying dispatches' wording from one microfilm for comparison with a second microfilm, the author was allowed to use two adjacent microfilm viewers simultaneously to make his comparisons.

Time and finances did not permit comparison of unlimited numbers of New York newspapers. Examination was confined to the files of three newspapers, the New York Herald, the New York Tribune, and the New York Courier and Enquirer, from 1846 to 1850, all on microfilm in the New York Public Library.[5]

Of prime concern in selecting the papers was whether complete daily runs were available on film. Moreover, it was felt that newspapers should be studied whose editors were personal, political enemies. No three New York editors of the period warred among themselves more frequently or viciously than James Gordon Bennett of the Herald, Horace Greeley of the Tribune, and James Watson Webb of the Courier and Enquirer.[6] Both the penny press (the Herald and the Tribune) and the political-mercantile press (the Courier and Enquirer) of the day should be represented. Finally, all three papers were competitors in the morning field and all were founders of the NYAP. Thus, every effort was made to compare papers that naturally, one would assume, would resist cooperative entanglements.

Background Conditions and Comments

Joint arrangements to collect news for New York papers date from before 1827 with creation of an "association of morning papers" which pooled resources to meet incoming packet ships and collect letters and packages of European newspapers for participating newspapers. Various arrangements for harbor coverage, expresses from Washington, coverage of presidential messages, dispatches on the Mexican War and the like followed this.[7]

None of these arrangements or associations, however, lasted more than a few years (as far as can be ascertained from the meager evidence available), and most of them delivered individual dispatches or letters to each newspaper rather than a common dispatch for all participants.

Such was the transitory state of news-gathering when telegraph lines began to go up in earnest in 1845-46.[8] As the telegraph advanced, it became increasingly clear that the old methods of news-gathering were about to change. One horse expressman or harbor boat could deliver letters from several newspapers' correspondents simultaneously, but the first correspondent to arrive at the telegraph office would deliver his dispatch first while his competitors had to wait their turns. Although the new telegraph would speed up delivery of a single message, it would create a bottleneck where several correspondents sought the line at the same time for their individual messages. Predictably, disputes over priority on telegraph lines, favoritism, underhanded means of holding a line in use until a news dispatch was ready for transmission mitigated telegraph's early usefulness to the press. In addition to the bottleneck problem, newspapers faced relatively high telegraphic rates in the early days, making it desirable to transmit bareboned summary accounts of news events, a departure from the lengthy and wordy letters correspondents were accustomed to sending to their newspapers.

A "broker" of news dispatches proved to be the early (and enduring) answer to these difficulties. Establishing a single correspondent at each

news center, brokers would receive a single news dispatch which was duplicated for distribution to subscriber-newspapers. This scheme freed individual correspondents from routine news coverage for their respective newspapers and guaranteed that no subscriber-newspaper would suffer competitively from reliance on the telegraph.

The earliest known broker of telegraphic news in New York City was Dr. Alexander Jones. Operating an independent agency of reporters and correspondents to deliver news dispatches to New York newspapers, Jones claims to have started this activity "early in the autumn of 1846."[9] He later became the first general agent of the New York Associated Press, lasting in that position until 1851. He describes these early activities but fails to specify precisely when they occurred. Presumably, from context he is here describing the work begun in the autumn of 1846.

> The business of telegraphing brought into requisition Telegraph Reporters. We were among the earliest to engage in the occupation; we commenced with the commencement of telegraphs, and when the whole system was new and imperfect, and in a manner without organization. * * * The press at first, owing to the expense, would not agree to receive more than would make from the half to one column of the /New York/ Sun newspaper. We then supplied them under a weekly contract and paid our own tolls and reporters' fees....[10]

Jones developed a cipher system to abbreviate news dispatches and save on telegraph tolls. He indicates that this went on for "a year or two" when an "association of three or four reporters was organized . . . to forward and receive news."[11]

> This association only lasted about twelve months, when it was dissolved, and, as far as New-York was concerned, we became the agent of the New-York Associated Press, for all news arrangements of a commercial and miscellaneous character throughout the United States.[12]

Jones's statement that he began this work in the autumn of 1846 is at variance with other of his statements. Assuming the NYAP began on May 13, 1848, (the earliest record of a NYAP) then twelve months plus

"a year or two" earlier would make his beginning May of 1845 or 1846. The first telegraph line to reach New York City was from Philadelphia, completed on January 22, 1846. This, in turn, was linked with Washington on June 5, 1846. He also states, as noted above, that he "commenced with the commencement of telegraphs."

From all of this, it seems as though Jones probably handled the earliest telegraphic dispatches carried by the New York press. When were these carried, and how early did they appear commonly in several New York newspapers? The answers to these questions offer a clue to the organizational genesis of the AP.

Appearance of the First Common Dispatches

Among the three dailies examined for this study, the first to carry a telegraphic dispatch was the Tribune. It was on May 2, 1846, and actually consisted of two dispatches: one from Utica, N.Y., (which must have come by mail from Albany since the Albany-New York line was not completed until the end of August, 1846), and one from Washington datelined "Correspondence of the Washington Patriot By Telegraph." (The latter also must have made part of the trip by mail or express since the New York-Washington link was about one month from completion.)

The next paper under study to carry telegraphic news was the Herald, on May 7, 1846. There was a dispatch on the war situation on the Mexican frontier,[13] and one from Washington on Congressional business.

That May 7 Congressional dispatch appeared in identical form in both the Tribune and the Herald and, thus, becomes the earliest known telegraphic dispatch shared by two New York newspapers. It was routine coverage, as the following full transcript indicates.

WASHINGTON, May 6—6½ P.M.

In Senate

The Committee on Finance feported a bill from the House

to supply deficiencies in certain appropriations for the current year, with the House amendments, which were recommended. Most of the amendments were adopted, the report agreed to, and the bill returned to the House.

Mr. SPEIGHT's resolution for the Senate to meet at 11 o'clock was rejected--ayes 16, noes 22.

The bill to settle the claims of New Hampshire for militia service was taken up and advocated by Mr. ATHERTON.

The House Committee took up the bill relative to the act of 1842, which imposes a duty of twenty per cent ad valorem on Java coffee.

Mr. WINTHROP made an able speech against the bill. He said it was not needed; the construction of the Treasury Department had been wrong under Mr. Bibb, but he said it was now right.

Mr. DROMGOOLE wished to introduce a privileged question regarding the right of the Circuit Court of the District to command the attendance of members of Congress in the Court. A discussion ensued, when, finally, a resolution by Mr. BURT, permitting Mr. Hopkins, who had been summoned, to attend, was adopted.

A communication was received from the President, enclosing the correspondence of Mr. Gordon, late Consul at Rio, respecting the African slave trade, which was laid on the table.[14]

This dispatch appeared in the Tribune and in the Herald's morning edition (page 4) and 2 p.m. Evening Edition (page 2).

The two papers ran telegraphic news every day or so during May and June of 1846, and each time they coincided, the Congressional reports were identical. Even notices that the Congressional reports were unavailable because of telegraph line disruptions between New York and Washington contained the same wording.[15] The papers continued to receive and print letters from friends and correspondents in Washington and other news centers well on into the 1850s. Thus, there was always a backup system for important news if the unpredictable telegraphic service went out. By the end of June, 1846, however, both the Tribune and Herald regularly carried the same telegraphic reports of the routine Congressional business, although these reports seldom ran more than seven or eight brief paragraphs.

On July 7, 1846, the Courier and Enquirer joined the telegraphic age with its first such dispatch, and carried it in common with the Herald and

Tribune. It was a long Congressional report, including summaries of several senators' arguments over disposition of a pending tariff bill, listing who voted for and against referring the bill to committee, and summarizing several debates in the House. It ran more than half a column in the Herald.[16]

It is significant to note here that as each of the three newspapers studied first printed telegraphic news, their reports were the same as those appearing in competing dailies. Some agent — perhaps Alexander Jones — was apparently enlisting papers as they decided to begin offering telegraphic news. And all subscribers were settling for the same dispatches as appeared in competitors' newspapers.

European Coverage

What is even more startling is the speed with which New York's papers combined to receive a common dispatch from inbound ships along the eastern seaboard. Here is how the sequence of events unfolded.

The New York-Boston telegraph line was completed on June 27, 1846. On July 4, 1846, the steamer Britannia eased into Boston Harbor from Liverpool, the first steamer to arrive after completion of the line. European news copy from the Britannia appeared in markedly different form in the Herald, Tribune, and Courier and Enquirer on July 5 and 6. Bennett, with typical coverage of his news-gathering efforts, heads his report with the account of how the special Herald messenger, Mr. L. Bigelow, took a fast express locomotive to Worcester, then another to Allyn's Point, then a steamer to Greenport, then another locomotive to Brooklyn. The trip took ten hours.[17]

Two weeks later, however, the steamer Cambria became the second ship to dock at Boston after completion of the telegraph line, and on July 18, 1846, all three papers studied carried identical reports of European news, using the new New York-Boston telegraph line. Bennett was elated over using the new line to receive foreign news.

> There was a bright, brilliant flash of lightning over the telegraphic line from Boston yesterday afternoon. Indeed, there was a succession of flashes, that beautifully lit up nearly every newspaper office in this city.
>
> The first flash announced that the steamship Cambria was off Boston; the next informed us that she was safely moored at the wharf; and the next that she brought some highly important intelligence.[18]

There followed in all three papers the same summary of news, word-for-word, the first five paragraphs of which read as follows:

> Our advices are from Liverpool of the 4th, from London of the 3rd, from Paris of the 1st, and so on.
>
> According to our report, two very important events have occurred since the 19th ult.--one the passage of the Corn Bill, and the other the resignation of the Ministry. Other important events have occurred in Europe, but these stand foremost.
>
> On the evening of the 25th ult., the House of Lords passed the third reading of the Corn Bill without a division.
>
> At two o'clock the next morning, the House of Commons left Sir Robert Peel and the government in a minority of seventy-three on the Irish Coercion Bill.
>
> On the 27th, Sir Robert Peel proceeded to the Isle of Wight, for the purpose of tendering his own and his colleagues' resignation to the Queen; and on Monday night the 29th, he made a lengthened exposition of his motives for resigning, in the House of Commons.[19]

Below the fifteen one-column headline decks, the dispatch ran almost exactly one full column in the Herald. This dispatch was, thus, the first common effort by these three New York papers to run a summary European dispatch. And it was only the second opportunity the press had at a common effort after completion of the New York-Boston line.

A common dispatch from Boston at the time of steamer arrivals was for these papers immediately thereafter a regular practice, continuing without interruption for nearly two years, after which New York editors made their first attempt at intercepting steamers at Halifax.

Use of this common dispatch in these morning papers, it should be noted, came twenty-two months before the May, 1848, exchange of letters which, as noted above, the literature commonly marks as the beginnings of the NYAP.

It is clear from the literature on this matter and from the time-lapse from ship arrival to transmission for the New York press that agents in Boston (and later in Halifax) were merely collecting the summary of European news compiled by the English press from European newspapers and telegraphic dispatches there. Willmer & Smith's European Times, published in Liverpool with summaries of European news expressly written for trans-atlantic passage on the Cunard steamers leaving Liverpool for Halifax and Boston, was the favored source of these European dispatches.[20]

In the meantime, the same ships that docked at Boston were coming on to New York City a day later, bringing each New York newspaper its individual package of foreign newspapers and letters. Although several papers regularly shared expenses for running a boat out to Sandy Hook or the Narrows to receive these mail packages from incoming ships, the editors made no effort to collect their common European news summaries in New York harbor. There was no need to as long as these same ships stopped at Boston and their news could be telegraphed on to New York. If the New York-Boston line was out of service when a steamer arrived in Boston, the papers would rely on their own mail packages, received when the ship arrived in New York.

From mid-1846 through 1849 an increasing number of telegraphic dispatches on domestic news events appeared in these papers, and in the same form. And throughout, the Washington reports appeared in common, growing in size and detail.

Later Efforts at European News Coverage

Work on extending the New York-Boston telegraph line northeastward toward Halifax, the steamers' first port of call, progressed very slowly. Eagerness to expedite receipt of European news overtook the New York publishers in the spring of 1848, when they purchased a fast steamer, named it Buena Vista, and sent it off to meet ships at Halifax and rush news dispatches to the Boston telegraph terminus. On its first attempt,

the ship's boiler sprang a leak and limped into Boston harbor the same day (April 17, 1848) that the ship whose news she was carrying was docking in New York City.[21]

Repaired, the Buena Vista finally succeeded at her task on June 7, 1848, by meeting the steamer Acadia, making the run to Boston in two days. The European dispatches appeared in common form the next morning in the three studied New York papers. This was the first dispatch taken off a transatlantic ship at Halifax.

The Buena Vista made two other successful trips, meeting the Britannia on June 24 and the Caledonia on July 6 at Halifax. But in the meantime, the America slipped past and docked at Boston on June 13 and the Cambria did the same on June 30. The publishers' expensive steamer express from Halifax, requiring four days for the roundtrip to Boston, was not able to meet all inbound ships and was costing the editors $1,000 each time it made the trip.[22] After meeting three ships, therefore, the Buena Vista was sold and the editors reverted to having dispatches telegraphed from Boston. This situation was not to change for incoming steamers until February, 1849, when the line was completed to Saint John, New Brunswick.

It seems worth noting here that the Buena Vista episode dates from mid-April, 1848, at least a month prior to the May, 1848, exchange of letters considered to be the earliest date of the NYAP. Further this venture was the work of the six editors, according to newspaper files and the literature, rather than an independent news broker. It seems safe to say that at least the NYAP is a month older than has been commonly held.

In the meantime, while Boston remained the port of entry for European news, the New York editors were busy in their own harbor. No less than four boats and ships had been commissioned to prowl the harbor for shipping news and to intercept inbound ships for the papers' mail parcels. Bennett's announcement on June 10, 1848, explains how cooperation was moving into New

York harbor.

Our Ship News Arrangements

> The new ship news arrangements of the New York Herald, and four of our contemporaries, are now complete. The auxiliary fleet, consisting of a swift boat at the Narrows, manned by Captain Robert Silvey, and two men; another boat at Quarantine, manned by Captain William Brogan, and another for the East river and harbor service, manned by Captain John Hall, commenced operations on Monday morning last [June 5, 1848]. The news steamer NEWSBOY, commanded by Captain William Bancker, and manned by engineers, firemen, sailors, &c. &c., for outside or sea service, entered upon her duty yesterday morning. It will thus be seen, that the leading journals of New York have now a most efficient SHIP NEWS ESTABLISHMENT in operation. We shall esteem it a favor if captains of vessels bound to this port will aid us in this new enterprise, by having our parcels of newspapers, and our letters, ready for immediate delivery to our news collectors. Sometimes a few minutes are of the greatest importance to us.[23]

According to the newspaper files examined for this period (up to January 13, 1849, when the Newsboy was offered for sale[24]), the Newsboy was accepting letters and paper packages for five of the original NYAP papers -- Herald, Courier and Enquirer, Journal of Commerce, Express and Sun. The sixth AP member, the Tribune, either used another ship, the Ajax, or waited until the ocean steamers docked to secure its files. There is no explanation for why the Tribune held out. The paper had carried Washington and Boston telegraphic dispatches in common with other New York papers as far back as May, 1846. This, however, would change in January, 1849, with the formation of the Harbor News Association, when the Tribune joined the harbor operations.

Two weeks after Bennett made the above announcement, he reported with satisfaction the success of the activities.

> SHIP NEWS ARRANGEMENTS--THE STEAMBOAT NEWS-BOY.--We informed our readers some days since that some of the newspapers of this city had associated themselves together, and purchased a steamboat, for the purpose of obtaining late ship and commercial news.
>
> The experiment has succeeded to an extent much beyond

> our most sanguine expectations. Vessels are boarded by the Captain of the "News-Boy" . . . frequently at a distance of one hundred miles from land, As a general thing she beats about some fifty to a hundred miles off, collects all the news, and runs up to the city at night, when the Captain distributes the news that he has collected during the day, in time for publication the next morning. . . . It is expensive to be sure, but we can afford it, and are willing to expend as much again as this costs, if any expedient offered from which we would receive a corresponding benefit.[25]

On January 11, 1849, the six original NYAP papers signed the Harbor News Association agreement -- the earliest extant formal agreement of the NYAP -- which noted that two NYAP ships would ply the New York harbor for news and established regulations for operation, finances, and use of news dispatches.[26] Two days later the Newsboy was being offered for sale and within a month the northern telegraph line had reached Saint John, N.B.

All of this activity early in 1849 seems to be more than coincidence, particularly if one reads an 1850 pamphlet by Daniel H. Craig, NYAP's second general agent (1851-66) and in 1850 the AP's Halifax agent. Noting that the operation of the Newsboy cost the association over $20,000 annually, Craig reports that extension of the telegraph line to Saint John gave the editors an opportunity for their most elaborate express-telegraph arrangement of this period. It would be costly (Craig reports that the express-telegraph arrangements from Halifax and involving Saint John cost $29,700 for 1849.), and to save money, the NYAP had to commission less expensive ships for New York harbor service.[27]

That telegraph line, opened to Saint John in February, 1849, meant that an AP correspondent could meet inbound steamers at Halifax, receive his European news summaries, race by horseback across Nova Scotia to Digby, traverse the Bay of Fundy on a steamer, and telegraph his summary to New York from Saint John. If all went well, the overland leg took six or seven hours, and the bay could be crossed in about eight hours.[28] Frequently, bad roads or accidents slowed the riders, or fog or ice floes delayed the steamer

trip, and then line troubles might delay telegraph transmission. Occasionally the dispatches, although received at Halifax, had to be taken again at Boston because line failures north of Boston had stranded the news at Saint John.

During nine months of 1849 twenty-five Halifax ship arrivals were thus telegraphed from Saint John to New York. Dispatches from four other arrivals were delayed by line trouble and were picked up either in Boston or New York. And news from one other arrival went astray when the New York City telegraph office burned, making reception from the north impossible.

All of this occurred between February 21, 1849, when the Europa's Halifax landing became the first expressed to, and telegraphed from, Saint John, and October 17, 1849, when the steamer Niagara's news was expressed to Sackville, N.B., then the new northern terminus of the line. Sackville was the point of telegraphic origin of news summaries until the line reached Halifax on November 14, 1849.

The next day the America arrived at Halifax from Liverpool, the first to be telegraphed the entire distance. Bennett, of course, made much of the new development.

> The steamship America arrived at Halifax yesterday morning. Her news was flashed through last night, from Halifax, over a telegraphic line eight hundred and fifty miles in length.
>
> The line was down yesterday, from five in the morning till eight o'clock in the evening. But for this interruption, the news would have been posted on the bulletins yesterday morning. After the break, which was between Calais and St. John, was repaired, the news came over the wires finely, and we now give it in its telegraphic details.[29]

The summary that followed was, of course, identical to those carried by the other papers studied.

With the line completed to Halifax in late 1849, an important early episode in American news-gathering came to an end. The leading New York press had commissioned agents and secured preferential line rights and rates to control foreign news-gathering. Periodic challenges from other agencies

and specific telegraph proprietors plagued the editors for the next ten years, but when the NYAP made its foreign news dispatches available to other papers on equitable terms on January 3, 1850,[30] the association was well on its way to creating an established, successful news-broker agency.

Conclusion

It appears impossible to pinpoint the founding of the AP, despite efforts of earlier historians who can uncover only an exchange of three letters in May, 1848, in which the association is referred to. The evidence presented here, on the other hand, demonstrates that cooperative news-gathering efforts among editors (who later formed the NYAP) began in May, 1846, four and a half weeks before the first telegraph line linked New York City with Washington. Not only did such cooperation occur for routine Washington news coverage, but it extended along the growing telegraphic system to each new point where important news dispatches could be gleaned.

This method of expanding cooperation takes on special significance along the northeastern seaboard where common telegraphic dispatches, prompted by inbound steamers, first appeared from Boston on July 17, 1846, rather than May, 1848, as previously claimed by the literature. Aside from the Buena Vista steamship interlude (which was another case of cooperative news-gathering, and one directed by NYAP editors, rather than an independent news-broker) telegraphic dispatches in common continued from Boston until the line was extended to Saint John, and then Sackville, and finally Halifax, itself. All of these were efforts which produced common European news summaries regularly in all the papers studied.

It seems likely that many--if not all--of these early common dispatches were moved by Dr. Alexander Jones and his independent telegraphic reporters, who, thus, became New York's first recorded telegraphic news-broker--i.e., the gatherer, transmitter, and distributor of a single news dispatch for the common use of several papers at the receiving end. It is impossible to

determine whether in 1846 the Jones system was his own creation or the suggestion, and under the control, of such leading New York editors as Bennett, Greeley, and Webb. The fact that common dispatches appeared as early as they did and grew in number and length over the next four years, points to the probability, it seems to this author, that a little of both may have been the case. It seems impossible to imagine Jones resisting or ignoring the requests and force of New York's leading editors. Such an array of power must have helped dictate his course. And it was probably to Jones's advantage to receive such direction, if, in turn, the financial success of his agency could thereby be secured.

In the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the growth of telegraph systems in the late 1840s, press utilization of, and adaptation to, dispatch coverage of distant events necessitated experimentation, both as to the system employed and the governing structure imposed. Too much uncertainty and challenge accompanied this dispatch coverage for the editors to sit idly by and allow Jones to decide their destinies.

At some point between May 7, 1846, and mid-May, 1848, this author suggests, Jones's pioneering enterprise, probably informally, became assimilated by the enterprising editors of New York's morning field. Thus, by May, 1848, the Associated Press was doing exactly what that exchange of letters indicates it was doing -- eliminating press competition by securing priority usage of the telegraph line at preferred rates. It should be noted that this bit of horsetrading occurred while two rival telegraph companies were constructing New York-Boston lines.[31] The NYAP could take advantage of new telegraphic competition to extract such an agreement from the original line.

If, as has been suggested above, there is no way of knowing when Jones's independent telegraphic agency became the New York Associated Press, and if, as the evidence reveals, leading New York papers were sharing telegraphic news dispatches from May 7, 1846, it may be as valid to claim AP's origins

extend back to 1846 as to say they are in 1848.

Whether, however, AP was "founded" in 1846, 1848, or 1849, is really of secondary importance to this paper in the final analysis. What does command attention is the evidence that as early as May, 1846, the common, cooperative telegraphic news dispatch was a journalistic reality in New York's leading morning press, and that this sector of the press rapidly took advantage of each new link in the growing telegraph system to expand its reach for the shared news report.

FOOTNOTES

[1]For summary discussions of the NYAP's founding and early history, see Edwin Emery, The Press and America, 3rd Ed. (Englewood Cliffs., N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 198-99; Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, 3rd Ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), pp. 251-52; and Alfred McClung Lee, The Daily Newspaper in America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), pp. 498-501. Somewhat more detailed treatments of AP's origins are found in Victor Rosewater, History of Cooperative News-Gathering in the United States (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1930), esp. pp. 57-98, and AP's house history, Oliver Gramling, AP: The Story of News (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1940), esp. pp. 19-31.

[2]See Richard A. Schwarzlose, "Harbor News Association: The Formal Origin of the AP," Journalism Quarterly, 45:253-56 (Summer 1968), for a survey of the evidence concerning AP's founding.

[3]The evidance is an exchange of printed pamphlets in 1850 between F.O.J. Smith, proprietor of the Morse telegraph line between New York City and Boston, and Daniel H. Craig, NYAP general agent 1851-66 and in 1850 AP's Halifax agent. Both pamphlets refer to a letter dated May 13, 1848, from Henry J. Raymond, then managing editor of the Courier and Enquirer, in which Raymond, on behalf of the six New York newspapers, seeks to use the New York-Boston line for transmission of news for the NYAP. Francis O. J. Smith, An Exposition of the Differences Existing Between Different Presses and Different Lines of Telegraph, Respecting the Transmission of Foreign News, Being a Letter and Accompanying Documents, Addressed to the Government Commissioners of the Nova Scotia Telegraph (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1850), pp. 27-30, and Dan[ie]l H. Craig, A Review of "An Exposition of the Differences Existing . . . Telegraph" (Halifax: N.p., 1850), pp. 17-18.

[4]AP news report copy began to appear in newspapers with credit lines or the (AP) logo about the turn of the century, became common during World War I, and was made mandatory by AP's Board of Directors in 1918. Gramling, op. cit., p. 286.

[5]The specific examination period for all three newspapers was from May 1, 1846, to January 31, 1850. The New York Public Library microfilms are probably the most complete files of these papers available to researchers, containing early and late editions and Sunday issues of the New York Herald and Supplemental Sections of the Courier and Enquirer. Most quotations in this paper of dispatches are from the Herald for the simple reason that that paper's microfilm produced a better photostatic copy for documentation than the other papers' films.

[6]Nothing surpasses reading the files of these papers in the 1840s for an understanding of the frequency and scope of editorial barrage unleashed by these editors on each other. Some idea, however, may be gained from Mott, op. cit., Chs. 13, 15, or Frederic Hudson, Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), Chs. 27-28, 33.

[7]See Lee, op. cit., pp. 482-98, for a good review of these activities.

[8]Samuel F. B. Morse's original experimental line, between Washington

and Baltimore, began operation on May 24, 1844, and by the fall of 1845 work had begun on erecting four of the five original telegraph lines granted patent rights by Morse and his associates. Information in this paper concerning telegraphic development is from Robert Luther Thompson, Wiring a Continent (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947). To read Thompson's description of specific lines discussed in this paper, see: New York-Washington line (Magnetic Telegraph Company), pp. 41-51; New York-Boston line (New York & Boston Magnetic Telegraph Association), pp. 57-62; Calais-Saint John-Sackville line (New Brunswick Telegraph Company), pp. 227-29, 236; and Sackville-Halifax line (Nova Scotia Telegraph Company), pp. 228, 236. Thompson also includes a thorough and insightful chapter on the "Rise of the Associated Press," pp. 217-39.

[9]Alexander Jones, Historical Sketch of the Electric Telegraph: Including Its Rise and Progress in the United States (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), p. 121.

[10]Ibid., pp. 123, 132.

[11]Ibid., p. 136.

[12]Ibid.

[13]An examination of Mexican War coverage reveals that the newspapers under study were largely making their own arrangements for dispatches from the war front, bypassing Jones and any other news-broker in the city. Dispatches, while telegraphed from the most southern penetration of the telegraph (The Washington-New Orleans line was not completed until mid-July, 1848, one year and five months after Gen. Taylor defeated the Mexicans at Buena Vista. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 142-43.), were filed by individual correspondents and took the speediest available route to the telegraph terminus —ship, mail, or horseback. There is no evidence that the New York supplier of telegraphic news dispatches had assigned a correspondent to the battlefield.

[14]New York Herald, May 7, 1846, p. 2.

[15]See, for example, notices in the Herald and Tribune for June 3 and 4, 1846.

[16]New York Herald, July 7, 1846, p. 3.

[17]New York Herald, July 5, 1846, p. 2.

[18]New York Herald, July 18, 1846, p. 2.

[19]Ibid.; Herald's italics.

[20]By the start of 1853, a John Hunter was named as NYAP's regular Liverpool

agent. "The Telegraph--the Press--and the Public," American Telegraph Magazine, 1:157 (January 31, 1853).

[21]Several sources describe the Buena Vista episode, but the most complete is Thompson, op. cit., pp. 226-27.

[22]Craig, op. cit., p. 8.

[23]New York Herald, June 10, 1848, p. 3.

[24]Rosewater, op. cit., pp. 84-85, where he quotes a for-sale card in the Courier and Enquirer for January 13, 1849.

[25]New York Herald, June 26, 1848, p. 2. (The press used at least three forms of their steamer's name: Newsboy, News Boy, and News-Boy.)

[26]See Schwarzlose, op. cit., p. 257, for details of this arrangement which is in the Henry J. Raymond Papers, New York Public Library.

[27]Craig, loc. cit.

[28]Details of this express may be found in: John W. Regan, "The Inception of the Associated Press. The Pony Express That in 1849 Forwarded European News from Halifax to Digby, To Be Conveyed by Vessel to St. John, and Thence Telegraphed to New York," Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections, 19:93-114 (1918). This title also describes the early rivalry between two agents in Halifax for recognition as NYAP's correspondent there, an episode also detailed in Thompson, op. cit., pp. 233-36.

[29]New York Herald, November 16, 1849, p. 2; Herald's italics.

[30]Rosewater, op. cit., p. 83.

[31]Thompson, op. cit., pp. 170-74.